

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

Vol. 24, No. 8

August 15, 1956

Whole No. 287

Fond Recollections

By J. Edward Leithead



Our genial publisher and editor, Edward T. LeBlanc, has asked me to set down some facts about myself. I was born in Philadelphia a couple of years before the Spanish-American War started, so, most of my early life the spotlight was on Teddy Roosevelt, the Rough Rider, the advocate of the strenuous life, who, when President of the United States, was usually clad, in cartoons of the day, in his Rough Rider uniform. Perhaps this was one reason I was such an avid reader of "Rough Rider Weekly", for Ted Strong, hero of the series, had been a sergeant in Roosevelt's Rough Riders. The fact that Col. Roosevelt had been a cattle rancher in his younger days naturally added glamor.

Another rough rider who loomed early on my youthful horizon was

Col. W. F. Cody, "Buffalo Bill", whom I can hear yet, booming out from horseback in front of the grandstand and flourishing his sombrero at the colorful assemblage of riders of all nations packing the arena, "... introducing a Congress of Rough Riders of the World!" Before this time I had discovered, at newsstands and in the windows of cigar stores, a fascinating type of literature devoted to this fabulous scout and plainsman—a color cover weekly, The Buffalo Bill stories, published by Street & Smith. I began my novel reading with Buffalo Bill, swiftly added others to the list: Diamond Dick, Ted Strong, Nick Carter, The Bradys (and Alice Montgomery), Young Wild West (and Arietta Murdock and Cheyenne Charlie and Hop Wah, the clever Chinaman). I was well aware of the Merri-

wells, Frank and Dick, every boy I knew read them. But I must admit that few of my nickels went for Tip Top, although I realized the excellence of these tales. Perhaps it was because baseball was the only game that interested me much, and Gilbert Patten surely knew how to write about it. I remember how eagerly I read his "The Rockspur Nine", but never bothered to get "The Rockspur Eleven." A boyhood pal of mine collected only those Tip Tops and Work and Wins containing baseball and football stories. We both had aspirations to be professional ball players, he a pitcher and myself a first baseman or outfielder. But we weren't quite that good, although pretty fair amateurs.

Before I was old enough to read, my great-aunt, who should have been a world traveler from her knowledge of places and people gained largely through reading, introduced me to the Leather Stocking Tales, Sherlock Holmes, The Revolutionary War stories for boys by E. T. Tomlinson, lots of Ellis, Castlemon and Alger books. She could read aloud for hours without tiring. Sherlock Holmes was often a bit beyond me at the time; I had to read them over later, and have done so many times since.

It was in grammar school that I first felt the urge to write something myself, and my experience was similar to that of Charles Fosdick (Har-

ry Castlemon) when he first tried his hand at writing. Every Friday afternoon we were supposed to do a short piece of imaginative writing, selecting our own subject. Then certain ones were called on to read aloud what they'd written. Gradually the teacher got to calling on me fairly often. I remember one boy who used to say, "Let Ed read his." He became an artist and eventually a top cartoonist.

World War I found me working for an insurance company, still writing on the side, though I hadn't sold a nickel's worth. But I was sure I could do it, I wouldn't quit. Naturally, a hitch in the field artillery, where I garnered six stripes, interfered with my literary efforts. I wasn't the first member of my family to be in a war. My great-great grandfather was with General Dan Morgan's riflemen at the Battle of the Cowpens, South Carolina, where Colonel Banastre Tarleton and his British dragoons were beaten for once; grandfather was wounded, taken prisoner and removed to Nova Scotia, afterward released and turned up in New York City. His son, my great-grandfather, became a paper manufacturer and book publisher. The latter died at the outbreak of the Civil War and both his sons enlisted for the duration, my grandfather serving as top sergeant with McClellan and later with Sherman, while his brother became a 1st lieu-

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tenant in Sheridan's cavalry. He was captured, held in Libby Prison for an exchange of officers. My son, William Cody Leithead, was a United States Marine in World War II, is now the father of two small daughters.

Being a Buffalo Bill admirer, it follows that I've always been a Wild West show fan. There were many of them in the old days besides Buffalo Bill's and Pawnee Bill's, but, in my opinion, the only one that ever equaled that of the two Bills, when operating separately or as a combination, was the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Real Wild West. With my wife I saw the last performance of the latter in Philadelphia in 1931, when the last of the brothers, Colonel Zack Miller, was running the show. Circuses, too, have ever been top entertainment for me. I'm very fond of animals, and where can you see finer specimens, from horses and elephants to trained lions and tigers, than at a well-managed circus. Not overlooking, of course, the wonderful trapeze artists, the high wire performers, the clowns, the eye-filling "specs", the spirited music, the dash and color which characterize a circus performance. I was quite small when my parents took me to my first Barnum & Bailey show and was, they have recorded, delighted. I still look forward every spring to the coming of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, the Greatest Show on Earth. I only regret that the Buffalo Bill-Pawnee Bill combination no more returns, to fill that great arena with galloping buffalo and longhorns, Indians and cowboys and frontiersmen, spinning broncs with intrepid riders, a careening stagecoach and an Indian village in turmoil before onrushing cavalry; they have all joined the ghostly caravan of shows of the past.

When the echoes of World War I had died away, I made my first sale of a short story—to Street & Smith for their "Western Story Magazine". Frank E. Blackwell was then editor. He had previously edited some of the 5-cent weeklies of that firm. Prior to this first sale, which of course left me jubilant, I had been corresponding regularly with Hugh Pendexter, then

at the height of his fame as a writer of historical serials for "Adventure." Pendexter had given me great encouragement, also constructive criticism which was invaluable.

Here occurs a coincidence of the kind that usually happens only in books. "Ace-High Magazine" had been launched by W. M. Clayton, the first of his big chain of pulps. I sold a story to "Ace-High", then another and another, as fast as I could get them out. I had gone back to the insurance business only briefly after completing my Army service; I had taken a job as salesman in a large bookstore, something I should have been doing long before—it suited me exactly. I met not a few celebrities while working there: Owen Wister, famous for his book, "The Virginian" and others, Joseph Hergesheimer, another famous author, George Gibbs, well-known Philadelphia author and artist, Harry Hervey, whose first novel, "Caravans by Night" was highly praised by Walter Winchell and other top critics (Mr. Hervey wrote many notable books and a successful play or two), Struthers Burt, another well-known Philadelphia author, some of whose books were on Western subjects, "Diary of a Dude Wrangler", "Powder River", Ethel Barrymore, stage and screen celebrity, and her equally famous uncle, John Drew, De Wolfe Hopper and Francis Wilson, who were in a revival of the musical that had made the "Floradora Girls" famous, Fay Bainter, then at the height of her stage fame, E. H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe, celebrated Shakespearean actors, Samuel Riddle, owner of the famous racehorse, "Man of War" (Mr. Riddle was fond of Western stories), Gifford Pinchot, then Governor of Pennsylvania, ex-Governor Edwin Stuart and William Jennings Bryan.

But to return to the unusual coincidence. "Ace-High" had begun to hit its stride (it was a big seller at the newsstands at one time, under the Clayton triangle trademark, and later, too, when published by Popular Publications); they liked my stuff at the Clayton office, and I learned that

one of their top writers had, without knowing me, urged the editor and the publisher to keep me turning 'em out. One day the editor took me around to the apartment of this writer who had befriended a newcomer. It was my first meeting with W. Bert Foster, but by no means the last, especially after I learned that he had written for years for the Street & Smith color cover weeklies. Above all, my favorite The Buffalo Bill Stories. Mrs. Foster was sometimes present. She wrote many yarns for "Ranch Romances" under her maiden name, Myrtle Juliette Corey, and never a rodeo held in Madison Square Garden but that she was in it aboard a bronco. Mr. Foster told me there was another ex-member of the "S. & S." staff working for the Clayton magazines—the artist, Charles L. Wrenn, who had done covers for practically every type of novel issued by Street & Smith. The meeting with Mr. Wrenn came later, also with Nick Eggenhofer, who was doing many of the illustrations (and covers as well) for Clayton's newest, illustrated magazine, "Cowboy Stories". Mr. Wrenn was turning out covers for "Ranch Romances" in an unbroken chain. Another famous artist, who had attracted attention with his work in some of the earliest issues of "Ace-High", was Jerry Delano.

The pressure of writing, in 1925, caused me to drop bookstore work and devote all my time to turning out yarns for various pulp Westerns. I had made a trip to California in 1923 (I had numerous relatives in Southern California and this was the first of four trips), and one of the high spots of that initial visit was half a day spent at William S. Hart's ranch at Newhall, California. I had corresponded with Mr. Hart previous to that, but at the time, unfortunately, he was off on location shooting one of his top Westerns of silent movie days. I think it was "Wild Bill Hickock." However, I was accorded a welcome by the caretaker of the ranch, had my picture taken with Mr. Hart's famous pinto horse, which had been retired from the screen. There was also a large mule which the cowboy actor

had used as a pack-mule while playing the role of a frontiersman in a picture called "Wagon Tracks", several other horses and a pack of dogs. They all got into the picture with "Pinto Ben" and me, displaying such friendly interest in a stranger that it was easy to believe in their owner's reputation for kindness to animals.

I saw the first run of "The Covered Wagon" in Hollywood, and, on a later visit, the first run of "The Iron Horse." Naturally, I saw a lot of Hollywood on my various trips. On one occasion I spent a whole day watching them shoot pictures at Universal, Culver City. For our honeymoon, in June 1926, my wife and I, after being married at 3 o'clock, stepped aboard the Broadway Limited, North Philadelphia Station, at 5:00, California-bound.

It was in the early twenties—I forget the exact one—that I saw an ad in "The Country Store", a swappers' exchange run in the back pages of "Ace-High Magazine", signed by one "Reckless Ralph, the Dime Novel King." Good old Ralph Cummings, it was the first time I'd seen his name, the first I knew that the dime and nickel novels which had been my steady fare for so many years were still obtainable. I'd lost sight of them for a while, but my talks with Bert Foster and Charles Wrenn had stimulated my desire to see and read them again. I wrote to Ralph, enclosing a check for \$25.00, telling him what kind of novels I'd liked in the past, to send me as many as the amount would cover. You all know how generous Ralph is—I was surprised and delighted at the big package of old-timers that, in due time, arrived by parcel post. It was the beginning of my collecting, which I have kept up ever since, the beginning of friendship with so many good fellows interested in the same hobby. At once I subscribed to Ralph Smith's excellent paper, "Happy Hours Magazine", and it wasn't very long before I was writing for it. Altogether, I think Ralph Smith published about eight of my articles.

The list is longer, and still growing,

in "Dime Novel Roundup", which Ralph Cummings started and kept going, often in the face of difficulty, and is now published and edited by Eddie LeBlanc. Eddie has asked me to list them up to date, so here goes (the earlier ones are probably not in order of publication):

Buffalo Bill, Multi-Stories Border King. A Bibliography of Buffalo Bill Story-paper Serials and Novels.

An artist Recalls Nickel Novel Days. (About Charles L. Wrenn and other staff artists of Street & Smith).

Dime Novel Bonanza. (About the Charles H. Austin Collection).

John H. Whitson, Street & Smith Author; also item, Spanish Reprints.

More about the Buffalo Bill Stories, also Rough Rider Weekly item.

Nick Carter and Buffalo Bill items.

The Harrison Keith Stories (in Magnet and New Magnet Library).

"King of the Wild West". A Sergeant of Roosevelt's Rough Riders on the Cattle Range.

Nick Carter in Print. Bibliographical Record of a Not Yet Forgotten Fictional Hero, From His Creation in 1886 to His Last Line in 1936.

The Derring-do of the Diamond Dicks. A Bibliographic Monograph on a Famous Fictional Father and Son.

Nick Carter Detective Tales in Magnet and New Magnet Library. (A list showing reprints and original stories).

Buffalo Bill Novels in Paper-back Book Format. (A list of Far West Library, Buffalo Bill Border Stories and Great Western Library.)

Boy Detectives. (Deadwood Dick, Jr., Broadway Billy, Young Sleuth, Young Broadbrim, Bowery Billy, et al.)

Tanbark and Spangles in the Five-cent Libraries.

Young Wild West.

Old-time Boy's Books. (Serial article.)

The Liberty Boys of '76.

More About the Nick Carter Libraries.

Buckskin Men of Forest and Plain. (Serial article.)

Old Melodramas.

The Wild West Shows Pass in

Grand Review. (Serial article.)

The Buckskin Bill Story.

"The Greatest Sleuth That Ever Lived."

The Civil War in Dime Novels.

The Bandit Brothers of Old Missouri. (One of a series.)

The James Boys in the Saddle Again. (One of a series.)

The Fiction Factory. A Book About Street & Smith, Publishers. Review.

When Fred Singleton was publishing his excellent "Peeps Into Our Sub-Literary Past", later re-titled, "19th Century Peep-Show", I wrote numerous articles for him.

Eddie LeBlanc also requests a list of the pulp Westerns for which I've written—it includes short stories, novelettes, complete novels and serials:

Western Story Magazine, Ace-High Magazine, Ranch Romances, Cowboy Stories, Rangeland Love Story, Western Romances, Western Aces, Western Trails, Super-Western, All-Novel Western, Red Seal Western, Short Stories, Thrilling Western, Thrilling Ranch, Popular Western, Texas Rangers, Rio Kid Western, Exciting Western, Fighting Western, Lariat Story Magazine, Top Western Fiction Annual. Several of the longer tales have been reprinted in pocket editions. Most of my yarns appeared under my own name, but I also used several pseudonyms, so that, many times, there were two of my stories in a single issue.

Pseudonyms I used on my stories were: "George R. MacFarland," "L. J. Edwards," "James Buell Hartley," "Wilson L. Covert" (the last, which is my brother's name in reverse, I used more frequently than any of the others).

THE END

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A LETTER FROM UPTON SINCLAIR

July 1, 1956

Editor, Dime-Novel Roundup:

Thanks for the copy of your issue 285. I am touched by Mr. Adimari's taking so much trouble to trace my early writings—which are not worthy of it. I do not have his address at hand, but will ask you to pass this on to him for his next installment. I do not recall the date of my mother's death, but it was in the early 1920's. I entered CCNY in Sept. 1892, a week or two before I was 14, the required age. (I wore short pants for the first two years there). I have a scrapbook my mother kept; it escaped the Helicon Hall fire because it was in her apartment. The first short story I sold was in the *Argosy* for July, 1895, and there was another in the Christmas issue. No doubt the City College has a file of the *Phrenocosmian Magazine* and that also has a story in July, 95. (Called a Prize Story, but I don't know what the prize was). I was a sophomore at that time. I have a copy of my first Mark Mallory story, torn out of the *Army and Navy Weekly*; it is not dated. It is positively the first issue and the first story. I can't be wrong about that. I know that H. H. Lewis told me he was starting a new magazine, and I was to go to West Point and get the material. He never wrote a line of the WP stories, only on the Navy which he claimed to know, and I doubt if I took that up until the Spanish war started. (My great grandfather, Commodore Arthur S. founded that academy, so I had a right to visit there!) To go back to WP for a moment, there is nothing in my early life I remember more clearly than the writing of the first MM story. It is "my style". A poor thing, my Lord, but mine own! (HHL didn't know a thing about WP.) Adimari may be right in saying that *Army and Navy Weekly* "ended in 1898" but that can only be because the name was changed. I know I wrote the MM stories longer than that. And I know that while still writing them I wrote for S and S another thing called the "Columbia

Library" which was either monthly or semi; it had to do with the war, and I wrote it all.

As to the matter of my "supporting myself from my early college days," I was writing and selling jokes and sketches for a year or more before I sold my first story. There are pages of these in the scrap book, dated '94. I figured that I earned \$4.50 a week and I lived on that.

As to whether I was happy doing the pulp writing, I was that in my college days and for a while after; but from the moment that I began to dream of doing serious writing I was bored with the other kind and it became a drudgery. Of course one can't set a date on a thing like that; it is cumulative and a matter of moods that come and go. I was happy to be able to support my mother during the years when my father was sinking deeper into alcoholism. From 1902 on I was unhappy not to be able to support my wife and baby. From '99 to '01 I had several serials in *Argosy*, of which my mother kept copies. That was the period when I hated doing potboilers, and doubtless they were not any good.

I might mention that I quoted my first Mark Mallory story in "The Cup of Fury," published this year. I would surely not have done so if there was any chance that I didn't write it.

Sincerely,

U. Sinclair

WANTED

Pamphlets on crime before 1880 such as those published by Barclay & Co., Philadelphia. Also interesting early Broad-sides on poetry, advertising, etc. Please describe condition carefully.

Benjamin Tighe

1755 Main St. Athol 1, Mass.

WANTED

American Boy Magazine. All issues Jan. 1911 to Dec. 1918 inc. Jan. 1922 to Dec. 1926 inc. Also 1928, 1929 and 1931. May be either single issues or bound.

C. L. Messecar

Box 951

Tigard, Oregon

NEWSY NEWS

By Ralph F. Cummings
Fisherville, Mass.

I hear that Mrs. George Sahr has to go to the hospital for a check-up—nothing serious, I hope.

Mrs. Lou Kohrt has to go to the hospital twice a month as she has to keep a bandage over her eyes.

Col. Charles D. Randolph of Davenport, Iowa, is framing some of his Buffalo Bill Stories—he has nos. 24 and 81 to trade for two of his wants, in same, what nos. do you have?

Well, I see where the Ringling Bros. & Barnum Bailey Circus called an end to their circus tour July 16th, and headed for their winter quarters. That's too bad, but it just had to happen I suppose, earlier in the year, the Clyde Beatty Circus and another one folded up, out in California. I understand the only one on the road now is the Cristiani or Christiani Circus, so I wonder how long they'll last???

I suppose by now Ed LeBlanc and his family are on their way home, after the long trip they had in 3 weeks time from July 1st—from Fall River to Niagara Falls, Detroit, Chicago, and on to the Black Hills, Deadwood, and into Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park and up to Virginia City, Montana and to Glacier National Park and up into Canada in Alberta to Edmonton and Athabasca where they will visit relatives of his wife's and then back home through Western Canada, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Western Ontario and back into the States and back home—every one will be tired I'll bet, even old tin Lizzie will be glad that run is over.

Bob Frye says when he was a boy he would rather play baseball than eat. He played with a team in Schenectady that held down the Champions of Schenectady for 7 years hand running. They played the Circus team

and won, and also the Brooklyn Dodgers, and won. This was way back in 1909 or 10. Bob must have been a terror in those days. But feels lots better now than he did, after his big loss of two brothers, of which we all send you our sympathy, Bob.

Don L. Steinhower was here July 2nd for a 4 or 5 hour visit. Don sure loves the old timers as much as I do and that's a big lot.

Who has these numbers to sell or trade? Golden Weekly #101, Poor nos. I need better copies of #1, 13, 22, 48, 81, 85, 110, 135, 136, 145. Swaps #6.

Wallace H. Waldrop, R.F.D. #5 Box 139, Greenville, S. C. wants a copy of "The Boys of '76", by Charles C. Coffin.

J. P. Guinon is on a vacation down to White City, N. Mex. Carl Linville has been up to New York City for a week with an old war buddy of his of 1918. Carl visited with Bob Smeltzer and expected to get out to see Charlie Duprez. Harold B. Silsbee is out in South Dakota land. Capt. Frank C. Acker, U.S.N., is over in Italy and France. So we wish them all the very best, and come to think of it, I'll head for Cape Cod for a few days.

Frank C. Willson of Melrose, Mass. was here, with his son, June 28th, for a little visit—the same old Frank. I mean young Frank I should say, for if I don't say it, he'll call me old man Cummings, Ha Ha.

I see Clyde Wakefield, Eli Messier and Tony Kigas every so often.

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- 56 G. D. Nichols, c/o R. P. Deering, 1228 Wilson Drive, West Covina, Calif. (New address)

INTERESTING DIME NOVEL FACTS

By Howard B. Silsbee

The 5c "Dime Novels" were mostly all stories for boys.

The coming of the movies besides sensational reputation brought the Dime Novel craze to a gradual death in the early 1900's. No literature has, however, influenced America so much. One famous historian has prophesied that some day the Dime Novel will be the richest field of research in American literature.

Eyes must have been a great deal better than they are now to read the small print of the Dime Novels of the '70's. That is probably the foundation of the great wealth of the optometrists today.

600,000 copies were sold of Ellis' "Seth Jones" as first published as No. 8 of Beadles Dime Novels.

A good many Dime Novel authors met violent deaths.

Dime Novels of Western lore copied James Fenimore Cooper's style for the most part.

The city in Dime Novels days was bad, the country was good.

Juvenile Delinquency of 1900 was blamed on the Dime Novel.

One commencement speaker, around the turn of the century, at Harvard devoted his entire address to the evil effect of the Dime Novel in America.

Most parents who forbade their children reading Dime Novels never read one themselves or they would have seen how harmless they were.

Most kids of the early part of this century learned their love of reading from reading Dime Novels. The kids of today look at pictures and don't learn to read.

Please Mention

The Roundup

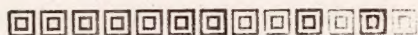
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EXCHANGE COLUMN

Wanted—Copies of Munsey's Popular Series and Leather Clad Tales. Also Western Story Magazine for 4-15-32, Samuel Olnhausen, 824 Chester Ave., East Liverpool, Ohio.

Have just purchased a large collection of old time boys books magazines and paper back novels. Your want lists welcome. Herman Brauner, 1436 N. Robinson St., Philadelphia 31, Pa.

Wanted—Old Cap Collier #13, 54, 180, 242, 269, 285, 296, 328, 349, 332, 520, all must have pictorial covers. George French. Kezar Falls, Maine.



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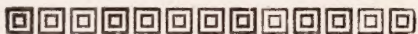
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